June 3, 2013

To: Tom Sullivan, President  
   Bob Low, Interim Provost  
   Richard Cate, Vice President for Finance and Administration  
   Gary Derr, Vice President for Executive Operations  
   Wanda Heading-Grant, Chief Diversity Officer  
   Barbara Johnson, Associate Vice President of Human Resource Services

From: Staff Council Personal and Professional Development and Occupational Environment Committee  
      Catherine Symans, Staff Council President  
      Renee Berteau, Staff Council Vice President

Re: Supervisory Training and Staff Performance Appraisal Recommendation

As Staff Council’s Personal and Professional Development and Occupational Environment Committee, we are responsible to review all matters related to personal and professional development of non-represented staff as they relate to conditions of employment. We also work to promote the continuing education of non-represented staff through training and enrichment opportunities.

In light of the recent announcement of administrative restructuring, our continued collaborative efforts with Human Resource Services (HRS), and the encouragement of President Sullivan, our Committee wants to take this opportunity to advocate for increased leadership support resulting in effective action on two longstanding areas of concern for staff at UVM: Supervisory Training and Staff Performance Appraisals.

**Supervisory Training**

Staff Council regularly hears reports from individuals in many departments about supervisors who poorly manage employees and who have received little or no supervisory training—and these supervisors show no desire to take advantage of training opportunities to improve their supervisory skills. They include both represented and non-represented faculty and staff, and many of them have been supervising UVM employees for a number of years. Among these are individuals whose supervision skills are so poor that they have developed a reputation which negatively impacts the health and productivity of employees they supervise and leads to negative perceptions of both the department and the University throughout the campus community and beyond.

We believe that effective Supervisory management is indispensable for the continued growth and success of staff at the University. Although UVM offers a high-quality Supervisory Learning Series training program through HRS Learning Services, participation is not mandatory, and those most in need of the training are often the least likely to attend.
It is the recommendation of this Committee that all staff and faculty with supervisory management responsibilities be formally trained through the HRS Learning Services’ Supervisory Learning Series that highlights conscientious leadership, commitment to diversity, self-awareness, and relevant skill development. The Supervisory Learning Series could be adapted easily to a suitable format that would enable participation by faculty. Participation should become a condition of continued employment for those hired or promoted to supervisor roles and the development of supervisory skills and effectiveness should be part of the annual review of supervisors.

In order to accomplish these goals, additional training resources will be required. Thought must also be given to instilling positive perceptions around supervisory training, especially for those already in managerial roles, while also recognizing and incentivizing the improvement of supervisory skills. The complex nature of the employment relationship, including the changing nature of policies, procedures, rules and regulations—in addition to the changing nature and needs of the workforce—suggests that effective supervision is critical to the continuing success of the University. Supervisors must be provided opportunities to continue their own professional development and the University must work hard to establish a culture where supervisors are expected to remain aware of policy developments and changing best practices in supervision.

**Staff Performance Appraisals**

Effective management practice recognizes the significance of performance appraisals as a structured formal interaction between an employee and supervisor, usually taking the form of a periodic interview. The purpose of this interaction is to assess individual performance and productivity in relation to pre-established criteria and organizational objectives, identify strengths and weaknesses, and pinpoint opportunities for improvement and skills development. It is also an ideal time to review compliance with government, health, safety, and environmental regulations, and to motivate staff through the recognition of individual contributions to the University.

Staff Performance Appraisals are currently not administered in many areas of the University, and supervisors are not held accountable for failure to complete them. There are many examples of staff who have been employed by UVM for years, have never participated in a performance appraisal, and thus have no record of their accomplishments or their deficiencies.

While we recognize that work is underway to update the PeopleAdmin system, enabling HRS to identify who has or has not completed Performance Appraisals, the University must support that effort by communicating the expectation that supervisors will complete regular staff performance appraisals, and by providing resource support to train supervisors to complete the Appraisals effectively.

We recommend that all staff be formally evaluated on an annual basis via a Performance Appraisal, with formal documentation provided to HRS for placement in each employee file. We recommend further outreach to Vice Presidents, Deans, Directors and other senior leaders to hold their Colleges, Units, and Departments accountable for completing Performance Appraisals, and we ask that more resources be allocated to support training for those in supervisory roles to execute truly meaningful Performance Appraisals.

We strongly support the work of HRS to upgrade PeopleAdmin functionality so that it can store Staff Performance Appraisals linked to position descriptions and maintained as a retrievable electronic record. We are hopeful that this work will continue to move forward and be completed in the near future.
**Conclusion**

We recognize that there has been program development by HRS and in some UVM departments for many years to support Supervisory Training and to ensure the completion of Staff Performance Appraisals. We believe that it is time to create the expectation by University leaders and to devote sufficient professional resources in these areas to demonstrate that the University is an institution that respects, values and supports its staff employees. We thank President Sullivan for encouraging us to continue this conversation and we hope to see continued progress in these areas.

By way of summary, we are recommending the following:

1. Stipulate that all staff and faculty with supervisory management responsibilities be formally trained through the HRS Learning Services’ Supervisory Learning Series.

2. Make the development of supervisory skills and effectiveness part of the annual performance appraisal for those with supervisory responsibilities.

3. Finance the creation of additional supervisory training resources.

4. Support the establishment of a culture where supervisors are expected to remain aware of policy developments and changing best practices.

5. Communicate the expectation that supervisors will complete annual staff performance appraisals, and hold them accountable to do so.

6. Provide resource support to ensure that supervisors are trained to complete staff performance appraisals effectively.

7. Ensure that PeopleAdmin functionality is upgraded swiftly to allow the storage and tracking of staff performance appraisals.